

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for supporting printer
maintenance in a network environment having a
5 server, at least one network device and a printer,
the server containing a plurality of printer
configuration files, said method comprising the
steps of:

accessing one of the printer configuration
10 files which corresponds to the printer, the
configuration file including a plurality of printer
maintenance function names and a plurality of
printer maintenance commands corresponding to the
printer maintenance function names;

15 generating an HTML-based page corresponding
to the printer, the HTML-based page containing each
of the printer maintenance function names from the
accessed printer configuration file; and

20 sending the HTML-based page to the network
device,

wherein, upon selection in the network
device of one of the printer maintenance function
names in the HTML-based page, the server sends to
the printer the printer maintenance command which
25 corresponds to the selected printer maintenance
function name.

2. A method according to Claim 1, further
including the step of receiving a printer
30 maintenance request from the network device, the
printer maintenance request containing a reference
to the printer.

3. A method according to Claim 2, wherein
35 the accessing step is performed in response to
receipt of the printer maintenance request.

4. A method according to Claim 1, wherein each of the printer configuration files has a standardized data format.

5 5. A method according to Claim 4, wherein the standardized data format is an industry standard format.

10 6. A method according to Claim 4, wherein the standardized data format includes an industry standard format and an extension to the industry standard format.

15 7. A method according to Claim 1, wherein each of the printer configuration files includes a plurality of printer maintenance function data sets, wherein each printer maintenance function data set includes a printer maintenance function name, a printer maintenance function description, a printer maintenance function resource and a printer maintenance function command parameter.

20 8. A method according to Claim 7, wherein the printer maintenance function resource is a file containing image data for incorporation into the HTML-based page.

25 9. A method according to Claim 8, wherein the image data in the file represents the printer maintenance function name corresponding to the printer maintenance function resource.

30 10. A method according to Claim 7, wherein the printer maintenance function command parameter is a printer maintenance function command which is identified by the printer maintenance function name

corresponding to the printer maintenance function command parameter.

5 11. A method according to Claim 7, wherein
the printer maintenance function command parameter
represents a command file containing a printer
maintenance function command which is identified by
the printer maintenance function name corresponding
10 to the printer maintenance function command
parameter.

15 12. A method according to Claim 7, further
including a command parameter indicator which, when
set to a first value, indicates that the printer
maintenance function command parameter is a printer
maintenance function command and, when set to a
second value, indicates that the printer maintenance
function command parameter represents a command file
containing a printer maintenance function command.

20 13. A method according to Claim 1, wherein
the interface module is a standardized software
module for building an HTML-based page.

25 14. A method according to Claim 13,
wherein the interface module is provided by the
operating system of the server.

30 15. A method according to Claim 1, wherein
the interface module is a common gateway interface
module.

35 16. A method according to Claim 1, wherein
the selection by the network device of one of the
printer maintenance function names is performed by a
user of the network device.

17. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the user of the network device selects one of the printer maintenance function names by using a pointing device connected to the network device.

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18. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the method is performed in the server.

19. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the network environment is a digital cable network.

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20. A method according to Claim 19, wherein the network device is a set top box.

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21. A method according to Claim 19, wherein the method is performed in the server which is located in a cable head end of the digital cable network.

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22. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the server executes a script to send the printer maintenance command to the printer.

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23. A method according to Claim 22, wherein the script is a common gateway interface script.

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24. A method for supporting printer maintenance in a network environment having a server, a plurality of network devices, and a printer connected to one of the plurality of network devices, the server containing a plurality of printer configuration files, said method comprising the steps of:

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receiving a printer maintenance request from one of the network devices, the printer

maintenance request containing a reference to the printer;

accessing one of the printer configuration files which corresponds to the printer, the printer configuration files having a standardized data format and including a plurality of printer maintenance function data sets each of which includes a printer maintenance function name, a printer maintenance function description, a printer maintenance function resource and a printer maintenance function command parameter;

generating, by use of an interface module in the server, an HTML-based page corresponding to the printer, the HTML-based page containing for each printer maintenance function data set the corresponding printer maintenance function name, the printer maintenance function description, and the printer maintenance function resource; and

sending the HTML-based page to the network device that sent the printer maintenance request,

wherein, upon selection by the network device of one of the printer maintenance function names in the HTML-based page, the server sends to the printer a printer maintenance function command which is derived from the printer maintenance function command parameter corresponding to the selected printer maintenance function name.

25. A network server for supporting printer maintenance in a network environment having at least one network device and a printer, the server containing a plurality of printer configuration files, comprising:

a program memory for storing process steps executable to perform a method according to any of Claims 1 to 24; and

a processor for executing the process steps stored in said program memory.

5 26. Computer-executable process steps
stored on a computer readable medium, said computer-executable process steps to support printer maintenance in a network environment having a server, at least one network device and a printer, the server containing a plurality of printer
10 configuration files, said computer-executable process steps comprising process steps executable to perform a method according to any of Claims 1 to 24.

15 27. A computer-readable medium which stores computer-executable process steps, the computer-executable process steps to support printer maintenance in a network environment having a server, at least one network device and a printer, the server containing a plurality of printer
20 configuration files, said computer-executable process steps comprising process steps executable to perform a method according to any of Claims 1 to 24.

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